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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this communication learning aid is to help Americans become more effective in understanding and communicating with people of another culture. This publication discusses some differences encountered in Samoa in such things as food, laws, customs, religion, language, dress and basic attitudes. It is designed to prepare the traveller for actual experiences in interacting and communicating with the people of Samoa. The first section describes the geography, history and government, economy, religion, people, and village and family customs. The Samoan traits of adherence to customs, sharing, and communication are investigated. Social customs, travel phrases, travel and holidays are touched on. A bibliography is included. (CHK)

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Building Bridges of Understanding

People of

Samoa

FL008811

Brigham Young University LANGUAGE & INTERCULTURAL RESEARCH CENTER Communication Learning Aid

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The editors have tried to present the characteristics of these people in an objective manner, without undue bias or emphasis. Where we have failed, we apologize for the erroneous impressions that may result and request that comments and corrections be sent to the Language & Intercultural Research Center, 240 B-34, BYU, Provo, Utah, 84602.

The editors are aware of the inherent dangers in using illustrations of a caricature nature since the style depends on distortion or exaggeration of features or mannerisms. The illustrations are intended to enliven the presentation, to make a contrast more graphic, and to help the reader visualize and retain a concept more easily. It is not implied that an idea presented by the illustration does reflect reality.

We appreciate and acknowledge the comments and contributions of various individuals and organizations in the preparation of this publication.

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Introduction

It has been said that in some ways you are like all other people, like some other people, and like no other person. Like you, for example, most Samoans would cry at a funeral, laugh at a good joke, and become irritated if bothered while trying to sleep. Love, anger, or fear are found to some degree in all humans. Desires to be accepted and to have peace of mind also are universal. However, different people possess different attitudes and values and have distinct patterns of behavior.

This Learning Aid can help you to communicate better with people who are like you in some ways and not like you in other ways. These ways are not necessarily right or wrong, better or worse; they may be just different, unfamiliar, and perhaps even offensive. This publication discusses some differences in such things as food, laws, customs, religion, language, dress, and basic attitudes which will be encountered in Samoa.

People perceive their relationships to those around them by thousands of subtle signs. Something as simple as knowing when and where to walk or sit is a "cultural cue." The loss of familiar cues when entering a new environment may produce strain and frustration. This cultural disorientation is commonly called "culture shock." As one learns to communicate, judiciously using the new cultural cues, the severity and amount of frustration and disorientation are reduced.

This Learning Aid will provide tools to help you recognize the situations that may cause this confusion. It will help you to develop skills which, if successfully applied, will enable you to communicate more effectively with the Samoans and make your association with them pleasant and meaningful.

The basic emphasis of this booklet is to prepare you for actual experience interacting and communicating with the people of Samoa in their environment and culture. Thousands of Samoans also live in California, Hawaii, and New Zealand, most of whom still retain some aspects of their traditional culture. As a result, the broad generalizations made will hold true at most times and with most Samoans. However, just as your attitudes, feelings and reactions very in many ways from the way another American might think or feel in a given circumstance, individual differences will also be common in the Samoan culture.

Because of the American and New Zealand influence in some parts of Samoa and the lack of this influence in other parts, Samoans are a very complex people culturally. Very modernized and very traditional Samoans may be found living in the same village, and the Westernized Samoan may be just as insulted when he is treated traditionally (due to his pride in his newly-acquired Western traits) as the traditional Samoan would be if treated as an American.

Pearl of the Pacific

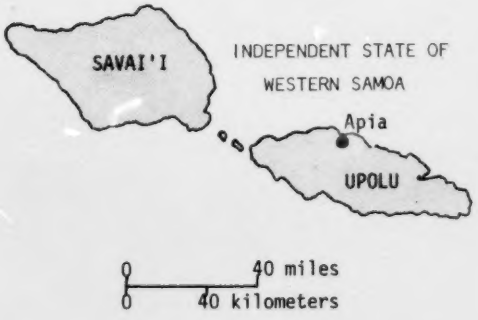
The islands of Samoa, the coral-fringed summits of a submarine volcanic range, lie in the South Pacific midway between Hawaii and Australia. Nine of the fifteen islands are inhabited.

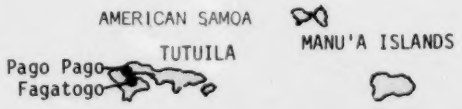
The islands are divided into two political affiliations. American Samoa, an unincorporated territory of the United States, is usually referred to as Eastern Samoa. It includes 76 square miles (about the size of the District of Columbia in the United States) and has a population of over 30,000. Fagatogo, Tutuila, is the capital of American Samoa. Pago Pago, however, is the major city on the island.

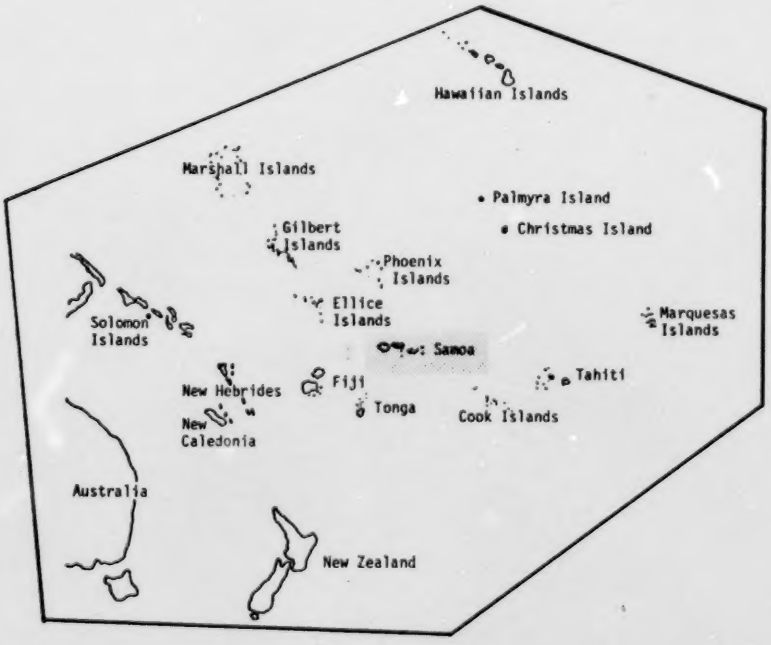
Western Samoa, whose capital city is Apia, Upolu, is an independent state of 1,133 square miles (slightly larger than Rhode Island). Its population is about 160,000.

The water is warm and calm between the beaches and the reefs that surround the islands. Inland, fresh water abounds in rivers, lakes, and waterfalls. In the highlands lush green mountain country rises to stony heights. There are many dormant volcanoes and old lava fields. Roads pass through picturesque Samoan villages stretched along the shores of the palm-fringed lagoons. Varieties of hibiscus, fragrant frangipani, ginger blooms and other tropical flowering shrubs abound.

The climate of Samoa is tropical. Temperatures change little, seldom rising above 85 degrees nor falling below 75 degrees. Humidity is high.







The heart of the South Seas

When introduced to someone, the first question you may ask is, "Where do you live?" The next question might be, "Where is that?" If further interested, "What is it like there?" is likely to follow. Asking these questions is an attempt to find similarities or to learn something new. Such conversation may be a stepping stone for increasing understanding.

Before you can best understand and communicate with the Samoans, you need to know what is important to them, their customs and attitudes, their personal lifestyle, and the national characteristics which influence their actions and values. Few things are more meaningful to a person than "home." Becoming familiar with the following facts about Samoa will help to orient you and remove some "fear of the unknown." It will also help you to begin to understand what is important to the Samoans. This, in turn, will become a basis for effective communication with them.

History

The Samoan Islands were sighted by the Dutch navigator, Jacob Roggeveen, in 1722 and named the Navigators Islands in 1768 by French navigator, Bouganville.

John Williams, of the interdenominational London Missionary Society, arrived in Samoa in 1830. He was followed by other missionaries and

the islanders were quickly converted to Christianity.

The Samoan Islands were ruled by chieftains in tribal units until the 1860's, when they came under the control of British, American, and German consuls.

International competition for South Pacific island bases led to a series of conventions whereby Eastern Samoa was annexed by the United States and Western Samoa by Germany. With the Treaty of Versailles following World War I, the mandate for the future government of Western Samoa was given to New Zealand. Western Samoa was finally given independence on January 1, 1962. American Samoa remains an unincorporated American territory.

Government

Western Samoa is an independent nation. Its form of government is a constitutional monarchy. The Parliament, headed by the prime minister, has 45 members elected from some 5,000 or more registered matais, or chiefs, plus two members representing the prominent minority groups. There is no universal adult suffrage in Western Samoa. Each family group elects a matai as its spokesman and he casts the vote for his family.

American Samoa is an unincorporated territory of the United States, administered by the United States Department of Interior. The Samoans born there are nationals of the United States. Their customs and culture are respected and protected. The governor has been appointed by the President of the United States, but beginning in 1977 American Samoans elected their own governor. The legislature consists of a 15-member Senate and a 17-member House of Representatives. A high court had five district courts make up the judicial branch.

Economy

Both Samoas are traditionally agrarian cultures with families owning and working banana and taro plantations. In Western Samoa, about 75 percent of the people farm for a living. They are dependent on coconuts, cocoa, bananas, and taro for export and for their own needs. In order to diversify its economy, the government of Western Samoa is initiating work to develop new agricultural products. Improvements are also being made in electric power, communication and transportation facilities.

The income in American Samoa is considerably higher than in Western Samoa. American Samoa has a cash-based economy, strengthened by American money and initiative. The majority of the people no longer farm for a living, and so are greatly dependent on agricultural exports

from Western Samoa and Tonga. Canned tuna is the only major export of American Samoa.

Education

Learning by watching and doing is the traditional way Samoans are taught. Formal education with teachers, books, and groups of students in a classroom, is an introduced innovation.

In 1836, the first printed matter in Samoan (several chapters of the Bible, some hymns, and a spelling book) were brought from Tahiti, headquarters of the London Missionary Society (now the Congregational Christian Church) in the Pacific.

At the turn of the century, education in Samoa was in the hands of various religious groups. The first government-run public school was established in 1903. Religious organizations still work in close cooperation with the governments to provide educational services.

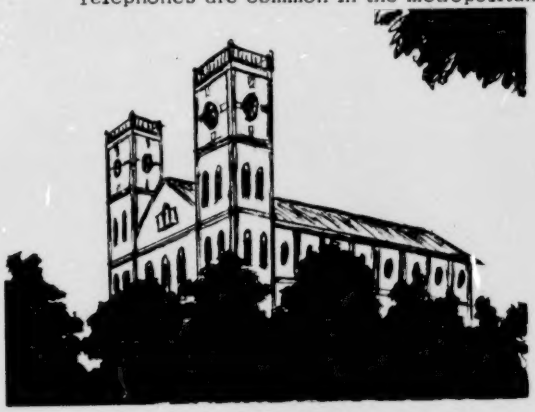
Government subsidized education is free in American Samoa. Some students go abroad for university education, mainly to the United States.

In Western Samoa education is strongly encouraged, although sometimes it is more limited because of financial restrictions and limitations in facilities. Some students go abroad for university education, often to New Zealand, Australia, Fiji, England, and the United States. The government runs a technical college, a teacher training college, and a college for tropical agriculture.

Transportation and communication

Public transportation is now common in both Samoas. Private cars abound in American Samoa. Inter-island boat transportation is available, and most of the islands are now connected by air transport.

Telephones are common in the metropolitan areas. Radiogram and telephone service is available 24 hours a day to all parts of the world from Apia, Western Samoa, and Pago Pago, American Samoa.



Local newspapers are available. Radio stations broadcast in Apia and Pago Pago. Television is common in American Samoa and in Apia, Western Samoa.

Religion

Christianity is an important part of Samoan culture, dating from the landing of John Williams of the London Missionary Society in 1830. Nearly every village has an elaborate church. Some of the churches are enormous in proportion to the congregations that contribute to their upkeep, but they are the center of a way of life in the islands.

Samoans are a very religious people. The Sabbath day is strictly observed in most villages. On this day, people wear their best clothes. The early missionaries taught the Samoans to have a regular prayer hour. Today the majority of the Samoans follow that early pattern of praying night and morning. The whole village observes these prayer hours, usually at six in the morning and six or seven in the early evening. All work in the village ceases and everyone is at home or in the village church. It is a time for singing hymns and praying.

About 35 percent of Samoans are members of the Christian Congregational Church. Other principal denominations are Catholic, Methodist, and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormon).

Language

Samoan is closely related to Hawaiian and other Polynesian languages. Although the majority of Samoans speak some English--bilingual education has been in effect for the greater part of this century--and there is little difficulty in getting along in Samoa by speaking only English, it is worthwhile for the visitor to take the time to gain at least a rudimentary knowledge of the language.

There are three levels of language: the ceremonial or oratorical language, the formal language, and the common language. Samoans are great orators and the greatest are those who understand the ceremonial or oratorical language and can skillfully manipulate its proverbial imagery.

The people

The people of Samoa are descendants of Polynesians who are believed to have migrated to the islands approximately 2,000 years ago. Samoans are closely related to Tongans, Tahitians, the Maori of New Zealand, and Hawaiians, and they speak a related language.

The great majority of the present population of American Samoa are ethnic Samoans. There are approximately 1,500 Asians, predominantly Korean and Japanese, working with the fishing fleets, for the tuna canneries, and around 350 Americans--government workers, educators and businessmen, as well as a sprinkling of New Zealanders, Australians, Europeans, Tongans and other Polynesians.

Most of the Western Samoans are also of full Polynesian descent. About 10 percent are of mixed Samoan and European parentage. There are also some Europeans, Chinese, New Zealanders, Australians, Tongans and other Polynesians in Western Samoa.

Samoans are friendly, unselfish, hospitable and easygoing. They have a reputation for being conservative, upright and dignified. They are friendly to visitors, but expect their customs to be respected. The majority of Samoans live their lives in traditional native fashion.

Village and family organization

Today, as in the past, the unit of Samoan life is the family or aiga (pronounced "eye-ing-a"). The aiga does not consist merely of parents and children, but is an extended family group of blood, marriage and adopted connections. The whole aiga is involved in upholding the honor of the title that gives them identity and standing in Samoan life.

The chief or matai is the acknowledged head of the whole family group. Selected by common consent of the aiga, the matai assumes responsibility for directing the use of family lands and other assets belonging to the aiga. The matai must, by his behavior, do honor to the title he bears and the people whose social status is bound up with it. This is especially true on such occasions as births, deaths, marriages, the investiture of chiefs and playing host to visitors.

Matais are of two classes: the "chiefs" or ali'i are the exalted, ceremonious, ultimately powerful, and responsible leaders of Samoans. The "talking chiefs" or tulafale are the stewards and executives to the chiefs. They are the mental storehouses of memories and traditions, the custodians of group knowledge, and the lawyer-like manipulators of words.

Usually a title is passed from father to son. But someone else may be selected because of his service to the aiga and the village, his individual intelligence and initiative, or his knowledge of the ceremonial and mythological aspects of the Samoan way of life. The selection process is somewhat democratic, but once the title is given, the matai has the final decision in the management and direction in affairs relating to land tenure and use, work effort and assignments, marriages, deaths and other crises, and negotiations with the matai of other groups.

The matais meet in a fono or village council. At these weekly meetings, the matais make rules for the village and punish people who have broken these rules. The matais have various titles and are given respect according to age, rank, wealth, and ability. The patterned speech and behavior used are of ancient origin.

In Samoa, old age has status over young people, titled people over untitled, men over women, and men and women over children.

There is a strong sense of obligation on the part of family members to share with the

extended family and, to some extent, with the entire village.

It is not customary for a man and his wife to walk together. Men, for example, walk to church before the women, who come later. In some churches, the husband does not sit by his wife. Increased Westernization is changing this tradition, however.

Children are taught to respect adults and are usually in the care of the older children after they are weaned. Scolding, public shaming, and physical punishment are the means of correcting behavior. It is considered part of the process of teaching respect for authority and age.

There is some pressure in Samoa to limit family size. But the Samoan culture views children as an asset and source of pride.

Samoan homes

In cities such as Apia and Pago Pago, families live in Western-style houses and a woman's work is similar to that of women living in Western countries.

In the villages, however, Samoans live in the traditional fale (fah-lay). These are oval, thatched-roof houses without walls. Palm frond blinds can be lowered when the weather is inclement. Few nails are used in the construction of these dwellings. The leaves forming the thatched roof are generally lashed together with sinnet fiber. The steep-pitched roofs readily shed torrential rains. Strong foundation posts are sunk deep into the ground and are sturdy enough to withstand gale winds.

Some fale have electric lights and radios. Some have Western-type beds, but usually people sleep on the floor where clean mats are spread. Hard wood pillows, favored by some older Samoans, are seldom used; soft pillows are the rule. Sheets

are used as blankets, and are rolled up in the mats and put on the rafters during the day. Samoan homes have no closets. Clothes are folded and placed in suitcases or chests.

Because fale have no walls, blinds are lowered for privacy. The fale are built around a village square or along the seashore. In addition to the main fale, the family will have a miniature fale, plus a kitchen and an umu, a pit in which food is baked.

Samoans bathe in open pools or, most commonly, in public showers where a specific time is designated for men and for women. Most everyone except small children wears a lava lava (a wrap-around skirt or dress) while they bathe.

Lifestyle

Some Samoan women are taught to make fine mats that often take a year or more to weave. Fine mats represent wealth. They are given as special gifts on all notable occasions. The fine mats are made of a leaf called lau'ie. The value of the mats is measured by the width of the straw, some of which is hair-thin. Fringe is often added to the ends of the mat.

Women also weave sleeping mats, house blinds, fans, purses, and baskets. Making tapa cloth is one of the ancient skills still practiced. Tapa cloth is the scraped and pounded inner bark of the mulberry bush. The designs are cut into a printing board, colored with dyes, and pressed into the cloth. Formerly tapa cloth was used exculsively for clothing, but imported woven cloth is used for this purpose now.

Women help on the plantation to raise taro, breadfruit, yams, and vegetables. They wash clothes by hand in a stream, at a pipe of running water, or at a pool. The ironing is done on a board which is laid on the floor. The board is covered with a cloth, and the iron is filled with hot charcoal. The use of electric irons in increasing.

Young girls sweep out the fale in the morning and tend the babies. Since burnable wood is a precious commodity, the children spend time each day gathering wood, leaves, and weeds that can be dried. Older boys help the men with the work on the plantations. Girls haul water in pails which are carried by hand or attached to the ends of a pole.

The food may be brought from the family plantation, which is usually some distance inland, or it may be gathered from a few plants and trees each family has growing near the house. After work, the men go fishing for food. The food is prepared and cooked by the women and young men of the family.

The food is usually baked in an umu. A fire is built in which stones are heated. When the stones are hot, the unburned wood is removed, the rocks are spread out, and the food is placed on the rocks. Hot rocks are placed on top of the food. Banana or breadfruit leaves cover the rocks, burlap is placed over the leaves, and the food is baked for about an hour.

Evening activities include conversing in or outside the fale, singing, listening to the radio, or watching television.

Arts and crafts

Samoans are especially gifted in wood carving. They produce beautifully shaped head rests, weapons, bowls, and other implements.

In addition to tapa cloth designs, women make beautiful necklaces of shells, seeds, or coral. Bracelets are made of tortoise shell. Lovely flower leis and dresses made of flower petals for special occasions are also an art form in Samoa.

Funeral customs

Providing compassionate service at the time of death is a traditional task of Samoan

women. The women take flowers, tapa, money or other gifts to the home of the deceased person. After exchanging ceremonious greetings with those present, all of the women are seated. The wife of the highest talking chief eulogizes the family and the deceased and speaks words of comfort and sympathy to the family.

A few of the women usually stay with the family until after the interrment. They spend the night singing mournful songs and devotional hymns. A feast follows the burial. It was a custom in Samoa to bury one's dead in the front yard. Samoans believed that if the grave was well taken care of the spirit of the dead person would not come back to bother them. Sometimes a roof is built over a grave.

Marriage customs

The majority of marriages are performed in a Christian church. The family then returns to the village home and enjoys a traditional celebration.

The traditional marriage ceremony begins with an interchange of property between the prospective husband's and wife's families. The bride's relatives, decked out in tapa and fine-mats which are her dowry, appear at the home of the groom's parents. In return they are feasted and presented with pigs, taro, bananas ripened underground, chickens, and other Samoan dishes.

This custom is observed to this day, with the bride's family providing the mats and tapa and the groom's family the pigs, kegs of salt beef, cases of meat and fish, taro and money.

Common-law marriages are also common in Samoa.

Diet

The basic food crops in Samoa are bananas, coconuts, breadfruit, and taro. Pigs and chickens are raised for food, and fish is frequently eaten.

A favorite food is pisupo (corned beef). The first canned goods to reach the islands contained pea soup. The next canned food introduced was corned beef, but because it came in cans the Samoans called it pisupo.

Palusami is a Samoan delicacy made of coconut cream cooked with fresh taro leaves; it is eaten with taro, bananas, or breadfruit.

Health and medical facilities

Medical services are given free of charge, but there is a small charge for drugs and hospital care. There are general hospitals in heavily populated urban areas. Medical treatment is administered outside the urban centers by doctors and nurses stationed in the outer district hospitals.

Samoans are fastidiously clean. They sweep and clean their homes, walks, and streets regularly, and often bathe two or three times a day. Even so, sanitation has become a health problem as the population continues to grow rapidly.

Visitors should wear shoes or thongs to avoid contracting parasites. Most people use netting at night to protect themselves from mosquitoes. Fungal infections of the skin are quite common, and visitors should take precautions to avoid them.

There are also many traditional "doctors" whose treatments include massage and incantations.

Recreation and entertainment

Samoans love to play their own version of cricket. Boating events, volleyball, rugby, tennis, and basketball are also popular.

Men, women and children love to dance and sing. Group chants, songs, and dances are enjoyed, sometimes accompanied by clapping and slapping of the body. Songs relate great events of the past or speak of love. Modern music is frequently heard.

Dances of the men are vigorous, stirring, and sometimes dangerous, as in the traditional knife dance. The women's dances are graceful. Some of their dancing is done kneeling down, and is characterized by lovely hand and arm gestures and subtle body movements.

Communicating with Samoans

As you anticipate an experience in a culture different than your own, you no doubt expect certain communication problems. The mistake most of us make is to assume that our problem in communication stems only from language differences and that the problem can be resolved by appropriate language training.

However, verbal communication comprises only a portion of the total communicative process. There is mounting evidence that nonverbal cues, which are often too subtle to even be conscious, often communicate far more than words. So, considering communication in a broader sense, the difficulty is not limited to a verbal language barrier. Communication involves ideas, images, and symbolic meaning. Communication problems arise when life experiences and cultures of the communicators are not the same.

The sections that follow will cover the following important facets of communication:

* How and why people think and act the way they do
* The language itself
* Nonverbal communication
* Behavioral do's and don'ts
* Making daily interactions easier for you and the Samoans

A people to get to know

Apart from "places to go and things to see," there are "people to know" in Samoa. Communication goes much deeper than language. Behaviorisms, ways of thinking, and manners of living also relate to communication.

In every culture certain feelings or assumptions influence how the members of that culture act and determine what value they place on certain things and ideas. Descriptions of these feelings and assumptions are here called <u>themes</u>.

Themes are a way of discussing a culture by using examples of behavior and attitudes. For example, Americans seem to believe that the most admirable trait is to do well in business and become wealthy. This theme is illustrated by the fact that Americans treat the wealthy men of their communities with the greatest respect. On the other hand, the Asian cultures seem to believe that the most admirable trait is wisdom, and they respect those who are older and wiser, or better educated.

Knowing the characteristic assumptions of the culture makes it possible to predict how the members of that culture will act in situations that involve the theme. For instance, North Americans are a future-conscious people. They believe that promptness is very important and that tardiness is an indication of indifference and inefficiency. A Latin American, whose concept of the importance of time is rather different, may be confused by the North American who always seems to be in a hurry, who expects others to be on time for appointments, and who apologizes for being a couple of minutes late.

A special exercise is used to illustrate the themes underlying Samoan culture. First, a life-like situation is presented in which someone is in a position that could prove frustrating or embarrassing. Inherent in each situation is an underlying way of thinking or doing (a theme) that is part of the Samoan culture. As you read each incident, identify the theme. Try to imagine the other circumstances in which it might occur.

Next, the theme will be discussed as it relates to cultural concerns. Finally another situation and a variety of possible reactions will be described. Using what you have learned from your study, you are to choose one reaction. The various alternatives are then discussed.

Several significant, general cultural themes found in Samoa have been chosen. As you understand and apply these principles of communication, you will adjust to other situations more easily.

Theme 1

The Samoan way

A young Samoan returned to his island after graduating from an American university. Ioane had studied agronomy at the university and was anxious to implement a plan which he thought would raise the standard of living of his small, rural village.

Ioane (Yo-ah-nay) knew how anxious his people were to obtain some foreign goods. But

since they lived largely from subsistence agriculture they had little cash. He knew that foreign goods could be more easily obtained if the villagers raised and sold a surplus of their own subsistence crops. Ioane held one of the fifteen village chief titles, and had the added status of an overseas education. He had enough savings to allow him to make a practical demonstration of his plan by raising some crops of his own.

At one of his first meetings with the council of chiefs, Ioane talked with the matai about the desirability of building a village store. Ioane said he would give them his saving, money in return for a 100 acre clearing in the forest. This money would be sufficient for the matai to build and stock a small store.

The proposal was accepted. It was estimated that 80 men could clear the 100 acres in a week. The area for clearing was chosen and a shelter built. At the end of the week, less than four acres had been cleared. Each day the men had gone to work on their own plantations instead.

None of the matais seemed surprised or distressed. They divided the money among themselves and forgot about the store. It was some time before Ioane realized what had happened. His acquired Western enthusiasm and practicality had led him to forget that there is an inherent conflict between Western and Samoan ways of looking at life--a basic difference in what they consider most important. The chiefs really wanted to obtain some foreign goods, but they found it more practical to use the money Ioane paid them to buy some goods now than to plan for the future revenues a store might produce. (See Bibliography*)

Fa'aSamoa

Samoans have a strong sense of what is called fa'a Samoa (fah-ah Samoa), or the "Samoan way" of doing things.

The matai system is an integral part of fa'a Samoa. It gives the individual a feeling of belonging and provides economic security. There is an emphasis on working together for the good of everyone else in the group or family.

Religion also plays an important role in determining what is "correct." In a few urban areas, the religious leaders may even have more influence than the local matai.

Fa'a Samoa includes a feeling of pride in anything that is Samoan. The mass media is not widespread enough to present Samoans with a knowledge of what is happening in the world, but they seem to have little desire for such knowledge. Although they seldom run away from conflict or problems (running is a sign of weakness), most are content to turn their attention to the matters of the village, reserving the larger concerns for the matai.

Although fa'aSamoa represents a rather rigid adherence to the old customs, the emphasis is also on a determination of what is worthwhile in the old culture as a basis for determining what new cultural elements to assimilate and adopt to meet specific needs. As the contact with the Western world increases, a matai must seek to preserve the traditional elements of the Samoan culture as far as possible, while using modern technology to raise the standard of living of those under his jurisdiction--a difficult task. A surprising aspect of Samoan culture is the speed with which new elements can be brought under fa'a Samoa.

Time to test yourself

Frank was only going to be in Samoa for a few weeks. He had looked forward to the opportunity of staying with his friend, Lafi, with whom he had attended school in the United States. After what he'd seen in movies about "tropical islands" he was anxious for a chance to "go native" and enjoy this vacation.

Frank decided before he arrived that since he was American, Lafi's family would not expect him to act any differently than he was accustomed to and would forgive him if he made a blunder (he'd heard about how loving and generous Samoans are). So he didn't know what to think when he was treated so cooly his first day in Samoa.

"Just do as I do," Lafi had said. But Frank felt more comfortable "being himself." When he was introduced to Lafi's family, everyone sat down to talk. But Frank was tired of sitting so long on the plane and walked around the fale while he talked with the family.

He thought it was a novelty to sit on the floor to eat. When more conversation followed the meal, Frank tried to find a more comfortable position than the cross-legged pose the others assumed. Finally he leaned back on his hands and stretched his long legs into the center of the circle. Why did Lafi have such a strange look on his face as he covered his legs with a mat and extended them toward the outside of the house? And Lafi had seemed quite embarrassed when Frank called to him across the village square, waving in the air the fish he'd caught that afternoon.

"I wish I knew what these Samoans expect of me," he thought. "They seem to get upset at the craziest things."

Does Frank have anything to worry about?

1. The Samoans really do accept Frank's American habits. They just have different ways of showing acceptance and friendship.

2. The Samoans are courteous enough not to be openly critical of Frank's "un-Samoan" ways, but they are disturbed by his lack of respect for their customs.

3. The Samoans are really furious at Frank's rudeness and disrespect.

SEE BELOW FOR DISCUSSION

1. Although many Samoans have had enough contact with Westerners to be aware of the differences in culture, Frank is offending them without realizing it. Their courteous silence does not, in this case, indicate approval.

2. This is true, though no one may show great displeasure openly. Someone (Lafi perhaps) should inform Frank of a few basic courtesies which it would be wise for Frank to adhere to. These would include not standing while talking or eating inside a fale, pointing covered legs toward the outside if stretching is necessary, and showing reserve in voice and action when in public.

3. Reactions may vary. The Samoans may not be "furious" at this foreigner's actions, since some allowance will be made for his lack of familiarity with the culture. Still, they will be disturbed to some degree, as described in #2.

Theme 2

What's mine is yours

Ioane was still anxious to see his village prosper. He suggested that each family plant 1000 taro in its own plantation every month and that the proceeds from the sale of the taro be used for a store. The idea was adopted and the taro planted.

At harvest time, however, almost every family was visited by relatives from other places who asked for a contribution of taro to cover their own needs. The villagers had been making similar requests of these same relatives for years. About the same time a delegation of talking chiefs arrived from a neighboring village with an urgent request for help as a shortage of food had developed because of a welcome ceremony that they had been preparing for a foreign delegation.

The village chiefs were deeply embarrassed by the situation. These villages had for years exchanged visits and because of their friendship arguments had been prevented, disputes settled, and disasters averted. The friendship was obviously more important than a store.

The taro requested by friends and relatives was given to the needy groups. Again Ioane's dream of a village-owned store disappeared in a wave of Samoan generosity, and Ioane felt his hopes fade of ever lifting his people above their subsistence standard of living. (See Bibliography*)

Sharing in the extended family

Once again Ioane had forgotten a Samoan trait that he had taken for granted as a child. The Samoan sense of security rests not only in an abundance of goods but in a system of reciprocity between family members and villages. In this case, they felt it did not pay to jeopardize such relationships for the sake of a few foreign goods.

Because prestige and honors are more important than wealth, there is no great difference between being rich and being poor. Samoans readily share what they have with others. Family members come to the aid of needy relatives, and neighbors give assistance in daily emergencies. One should not assume, however, that common courtesies are disregarded. Private property is very much respected. Assistance is generously given, however, when courteously requested.

It is the responsibility of the matai to manage the family's resources, eliminate want and suffering, settle disputes, and maintain laws and customs. It is the responsibility of everyone in the family group to follow the decisions of the matai and to give him aid and assistance whenever needed. When the system functions as intended, the basic welfare of the group and the individual is assured. Samoans have proved, in fact, that reciprocity makes orphanages, nurses, policemen, insurance programs, and retirement benefits unnecessary.

As Samoans increasingly move into a cash economy, the matai system is experiencing some difficulty, however. The desire to exchange cash for desired foreign goods and services creates some reluctance to turn over cash to the matai because it would otherwise provide access to import goods.

Time to test yourself

At a later time, Ioane's village raises another large taro crop. This time the bulk of the crop is sold in New Zealand. The money earned is enough to build a small village store, but not enough to stock it. Goods are obtained on credit, using the building as security.

The matais appoint Ioane's uncle to manage the store.

By the end of the first month the store is out of stock and unable to replace it since the appointed manager has sold goods largely on credit. He justifies this by explaining that he would otherwise have had few sales. He accepts payment in copra, which is more readily available than cash, but at the end of three months the intake of copra is still far less than the output of goods. The creditor forecloses and the store is lost.

What can Ioane do?

1. Ioane suggests that the mismanagement of the store be thoroughly investigated by the matai.
2. Ioane personally investigates the mismanagement of the store.
3. Ioane resigns himself to the fact that familial and interpersonal loyalties are viewed in a different way than in the West.

SEE BELOW FOR DISCUSSION

1. This proposal would be firmly rejected. It would be an affront to the matai and his uncle, who are very important members of the community.
2. This would be inappropriate for the same reason as #1.
3. Yes. Ioane must be reminded that his fellow villagers are united by unquestioning respect for those in authority. A little store is not worth the embarrassment and confusion which an investigation would cause.

Theme 3

Say what you mean

Mr. Thompson was on assignment for his firm in Western Samoa. Pita, a local representative, explained several problems that he had experienced in his company and asked Mr. Thompson if he could help clear them up when he returned to company headquarters in the United States.

Mr. Thompson felt that most of the problems lay outside of his jurisdiction, but he told Pita, "I'll see what I can do to solve these problems when I return to San Francisco."

A few months later, Mr. Thompson returned to Samoa. When he met with Pita, the Samoan asked if he had yet solved the problem they had discussed.

"But I told you I would bring the problem to the attention of those responsible. I didn't mean that I would personally solve the problem for you."

Pita, however, felt that Mr. Thompson had not kept his word.

Conversation

The feasts and other ceremonies that play such an important part in the social life of the families and villages are designed to reinforce the need for reciprocity (discussed in Theme II). No one could possibly put on a feast without contributions from many members of the family, who are usually willing to help and participate.

In addition to formal and traditional ceremonies, the importance of many routine events is enhanced by the oratory which is usually evidenced. Samoans have an oral culture. From early childhood, Samoans hear and participate in the orally communicated way of life. Talking well is a prerequisite to being successful in society.

The use of many words to express an idea enhances the ceremonial importance of any occasion. To a Samoan, for example, a simple "thank you" for hospitality received is not enough. The things that were delightful are explained in minute detail so that the host understands the guest's appreciation completely.

Status indicates that certain subjects are more important points of discussion than others. The matais are allowed much greater latitude in this respect.

Oratory is considered a "game" or an "act." The drama of the proceedings is a more important and enjoyable part than any decision that might be reached.

Persuasion generally occurs because of the status of the speaker rather than the logic of his arguments. However, Samoan speaking is not necessarily aimed at influencing the listeners. Often it merely confirms established ceremonial practices and cultural information. An audience may respond to a speaker by murmuring words of thanks and appreciation or by making comments. The speaker must exhibit superb intellectual preparation, language usage, and must behave as an orator.

It is expected that a speaker will always tell the truth. As a result, Samoans tend not to doubt what they hear. In fact, they take everything that is said quite literally. When an American greets a Samoan with "How are you?" he may be somewhat surprised when the Samoan begins to really tell how he is. When Mr. Thompson told Pita he would see what he could do to solve the problem, Pita expected him to actually do all he could do to resolve the difficulties.

Another Samoan cultural trait that may cause communication problems is that Samoans

sometimes answer in the way they feel another person expects them to answer. For example, an American teacher in Samoa may ask one of her students, "Will you be here at four o'clock so I can help you with your studies?" The Samoan child may answer "yes," even though he has another appointment at four o'clock and has no intention of being present at the appointed hour. He knows the teacher wants him there, but to say "No, I cannot be there" would be disrespectful to her authority as a teacher. This would have been a much greater offense than not showing up as agreed.

Samoans will also tend to say "yes" in an argument rather than embarrass someone in authority by disagreeing. They will sometimes say "I understand" because they do not want to embarrass you by having you repeat something. This trait has nothing to do with lying. It is the Samoan way of keeping someone in authority from losing face.

Time to test yourself

You are a tourist visiting Samoa. The heel comes off one of your shoes. You are able to locate a Samoan who assures you he can repair the shoe.

"Can you finish in a couple of hours? I'd like to wear the shoes later on."

"Of course," the Samoan repairman assures you.

When you return later, you see the shoe still sitting on the shelf where the repairman has placed it. What do you do?

1. You let the repairman know you're upset that he didn't keep his promise. You insist he make the repair while you wait.

2. You take the shoe and try to find another repairman.

3. You realize that when the repairman said he could fix the heel shortly that he was merely trying to be courteous. He knew it would take him longer to get to it, but did not want to upset you. Check back later.

SEE BELOW FOR DISCUSSION

1. If you use this tactic, you will probably get your shoe repaired soon, but you will leave the repairman feeling very upset because he has offended you.

2. This would also offend the Samoan. Not only would he feel terrible for having displeased you, but by taking the shoe away he will feel you are casting doubts on his ability to do the job.

3. Take it easy. Life moves at a much more leisurely pace in Samoa. Americans who rush around on a pre-planned tight schedule are bound to be disappointed occasionally when their expectations aren't realized immediately.

Also remember that Samoans take great pride in their tact and diplomacy. Their manner of expression is likely to be elaborate and indirect. They may make a committment they can't keep or give incomplete information rather than disappoint you. This is the Samoan way of reducing conflict and making interaction pleasant for all concerned. True feelings may be unpleasant or embarrassing to those listening. It is considered better to tell people what they want to hear even though what is said might be untrue, rather than disturb them with an unpleasant truth.

When is a wave goodbye a wave goodbye?

As you prepare for your experience in Samoa, you may think you can get along with hand signals and other gestures until you learn to speak the new language. Unfortunately, there are few facial expressions that mean exactly the same thing throughout the whole world. In some countries there are similarities to gestures and expressions used by Americans. However, most likely you will find your natural communication cues being misunderstood or misinterpreted. (For example, the way a Samoan motions "come here" is similar to the American way of waving goodbye.)

The Samoan people cherish their customs, and visitors should respect and conform to them in as many ways as possible. But don't be intimidated by them, for the Samoan people are loving, understanding people, and make allowances for errors made by foreigners.

Still, you are more likely to be accepted by the people of Samoa if you conform to some of their more important customs. Effective intercultural verbal and nonverbal communication includes the following:

Visiting

Visitors never enter a Samoan home until the mats have been laid down. It is a Samoan custom to sit cross-legged on mats. It is also customary to leave one's shoes outside.

Whenever a guest enters a home, speeches of welcome are delivered, and the guest makes an appropriate response to the formal greeting. Guests sit where the host indicates.

Don't talk to others while standing, as this is considered bad manners. Sit down cross-legged on a straw mat and then talk. If your Samoan hosts stand to say hello or goodbye to you, you should also rise.

Do not stretch your legs out while sitting. If you are tired while sitting cross-legged, you may cover your feet and legs with a mat and then stretch them, but do not point the feet toward the middle of the home or at the host.

A visitor to Samoa who lives with a Samoan family during his stay will frequently be invited to stay elsewhere. But to leave one host to stay with another will subject the first host to considerable shame. Resist these offers with a thank-you for the invitation, and a statement that perhaps on some other visit it will be possible, but that you feel you must stay with your present host for the time being. Let your hosts know from the first how long you plan to stay with them. Don't let your departure come as a surprise.

Eating

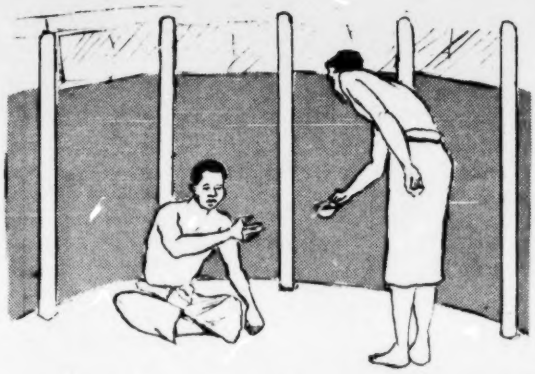
Don't eat while standing inside a fale or while walking in a village.

Even though fingers are used in place of utensils, licking the fingers is not polite. In most cases, Western visitors will be provided with utensils. Often at a meal a bowl of water will be provided for washing hands. Guests may request this before the meal if it is not offered.

Visitors should feel at ease when eating and partake only of those foods which appeal to them. If offered food when not hungry, the guest should still eat a little just to show appreciation for what has been prepared and offered to him. A host would be disappointed if his guest refused any food at all. It is not appropriate to communicate distaste for certain foods, but compliments are appreciated.

Kava is the national traditional beverage. It is served at meetings of chiefs, when entertaining important guests and on occasions of particular rejoicing or great sorrow.

The Kava ceremony is a sacred and highly



respected custom in Samoa. If served kava, before you start drinking, hold the cup out in front of you, spill a few drops (don't worry about the mats getting wet), and say to your hosts, "Manuia" (Mah-noo-ee-ah), which means "good fortune." It is not necessary to drink the entire amount of kava. If some is left, tip it outside and hand the cup back to the server.

Gifts

The attitude of sharing discussed in Theme 2 is manifested by the importance of gift-giving. Among Samoans it is often used as a means of displaying wealth and enhancing prestige. The receiver generally feels an informal obligation to the gift giver.

Hospitality is also viewed as a means of establishing an alliance with someone. The receiver will often present a gift or show forth hospitality in return.

It should be noted, however, that Samoans are very generous people and will frequently give a gift to someone they love or respect with no thought of receiving favors or gifts in return.

General courtesies

* Don't criticise a Samoan in front of another Samoan.

* Don't be overwhelmed by the natural curiosity of village children. The friendlier the visitor, the more excited they become.

* Almost all Samoans are Christians and place an enormous importance on their religious life. If you are staying in a Samoan home, you will be expected to share in the short hymn and prayer service which every family normally holds in the early morning and evening. Grace is said before every meal. Avoid work on Sundays as this will offend the villagers' sense of what is appropriate on the Sabbath. In addition, you should take care not to create a disturbance during prayer hours while in or near a village. When a family is holding a prayer session in their fale, wait until it is over before entering.

* When chiefs are holding a meeting in an open fale, a passer-by should not carry an umbrella or a load on his shoulders while walking past. Instead, lower it to hip level. This is a sign of respect to the chiefs and their deliberations.

* There is a saying in Samoa that anything can be bought with a "fa'amolemole" (fah-ah-mohlay-molay), or "Please." Don't take anything without first asking permission. A thirsty visitor can stop at any house and request something to drink, and it will be cheerfully given to him.

Breaking language barriers

If you cannot speak another person's language, you are terribly handicapped in communicating with him. Because language is the most important communication tool in any society, it is possibly the area of your greatest security. You will come into the whole new world of Samoa, where you may not know the Samoan language at all. You will be stripped of your primary means of interacting with others, it would seem.

The majority of Samoans speak some English. But it is still worthwhile for the visitor to take the time to acquire some basic knowledge of the Samoan language. The following are some words and phrases which will bring a warm response from the Samoans when spoken in their native tongue.

ENGLISH	SAMOAN SPELLING	PRONUNCIATION
Hello, Welcome, Hi	Talofa	tah-LOH-fah
How are you?	O Fa'apefea mai oe?	OH FAH-uh-pay-FAY-uh my oy
Goodbye	Tofā	toh-FAH
Farewell (long life)	Tofā soi fua	toh-FAH soy-FOO-ah
Good night	Manuia le pō	mahn-WEE-uh lay poh
Please	Fa'amolemole	FAH-a-mohlay-MOH-lay
Thank you	Fa'afetai	FAH-a-fay-TIE
No thank you	Leai fa'afetai	ley-EYE FAH-a-fay-TIE
Yes	Ioe	ee-OY
No	Leai	lay-EYE
Caucasian foreigner	Palagi	pa-a-LONG-ee

Plaid pants, sport shirt, hat, camera, and shades

You are dressed in your "travel duds" and plan to buy a beautiful Samoan mat before you fly home. Sound exciting? It should be. However, if you are not familiar with Samoan shopping procedures, you may find yourself dissatisfied with the results of your shopping venture.

There are differences in many aspects of Samoan life. A glance through this section will help you plan your time and avoid harassment by "the little things."

Shopping

American Samoa is a duty-free area. Most stores carry duty-free merchandise including cameras, tape recorders, jewelry, perfume, cosmetics, fabrics, etc. However, the variety of articles is limited, and merchants often make up for the lack of duty with a high mark-up. Business hours are from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. weekdays, and 8 a.m. to 12 noon on Saturdays. Some stores are open on Sunday.

None of the duty-free stores accept credit cards. Transactions are either by cash or traveler's check.

The shops in Western Samoa are stocked with goods from all over the world. Samoan handicrafts are sold in the shops and at stalls located along the beach front.

Public transportation

In American Samoa, all buses are privately owned; service stops after 5 p.m. and on Sundays and holidays. Bus transportation is relatively inexpensive and the routes are irregular--according to the needs and destinations of the passengers.

Taxis are numerous and available either by phone or at taxi stands. Rental cars are also available.

There are several weekly jet flights from Honolulu to Samoa. Other flights connect Pago Pago with Sydney, Australia; Auckland, New Zealand; Noumea, New Caledonia; Suva, Fiji; and Papeete, Tahiti. Polynesian Airlines and South Pacific Island Airways (SPIA) make daily flights between American and Western Samoa.

Appropriate dress

Many Samoan men and women wear Western-style clothing. Traditional Samoan attire is also common: for men, a lava lava (wrap around skirt) with a shirt, and for women a puletasi or long dress.

Samoan custom forbids women to wear pants or slacks, except in athletics. Shorts are generally worn only when swimming. In American Samoa, however, the Western custom of women wearing pants is become more common. Bikinis are not worn in or out of the water. Visitors to Samoa

should avoid wearing shorts or other brief clothing. For men, long hair and beards are forbidden in most of the villages.

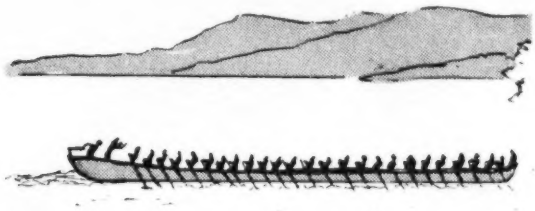
Festivals and holidays

April 17, Flag Day, in the "Fourth of July" of American Samoa--a commemoration of the first raising of the American flag in what was formerly Eastern Samoa, on April 17, 1900. Day-long activities include a parade and a large-scale display of Samoan singing, dancing, and colorful costumes.

During the first week in June, Western Samoans celebrate their independence. A traditional presentation of gifts is accompanied by authentic Samoan native singing and dancing, fautasi (long-

boat) racing, horse racing, rugby competitions and various other sporting contests.

The second Sunday of October is White Sunday. Following a tradition brought to the Samoan Islands by the London Missionary Society, and now observed by most Protestant denominations, White Sunday is literally "Children's Day" in the



islands. On White Sunday, children read Bible passages, give sermons, act out religious plays, etc. Later, family feasts are held, with children in the seats of honor. Everyone is dressed in white.

When the moon and tide are right, the palolo (coral worms) emerge from the reef--usually late at night--and swarm in the reef waters from October to early November. Samoans, who consider palolo worms a great delicacy, turn out in force one night of the season with nets, cheesecloth, buckets, and gas lanterns to scoop up the palolo.

An atmosphere of festivity prevails during the Christmas and New Year season. Native song and dance troupes make their rounds in the villages. The many social clubs, societies and associations hold art festivals and dances featuring authentic Polynesian shows. Cricket matches and other sports competitions are an important part of the celebration. The festivities are climaxed on New Year's Eve at midnight when there is ringing of church bells, beating of native drums, and firing of bamboo guns. For the rest of the night the islanders commemorate the New Year with festivities.

General suggestions

Water in hotels is safe for visitors. Other water should be boiled.

Don't wade out to the reefs without footwear. Some coral reefs have very sharp edges.

Don't swim beyond the reef. It is dangerous for even a very strong swimmer.

The beginning

You are now at the "real beginning" of your cultural experience in Samoa. You will find that the old cliche, "Experience is the best teacher," will be true.

You will undoubtedly learn much more from your own experiences, successes, and failures than from this Learning Aid. However, this information gives you some principles to get you started effectively communicating with the people of Samoa. Review this Learning Aid as needed. Only as you experience similar situations will you really begin to understand what you have learned.

While in Samoa you will be tempted at times to wonder about the "strange foreigners" around. At these times, it would be good to remind yourself that the Samoans are just reflecting their culture and that, in fact, you are the "foreigner," the one who is different.

The concepts presented in this booklet will not always apply in every situation or in every part of Samoa. They do describe some of the basic facts about Samoan behavior and some of the premises upon which Samoan life is based.

You are going to make some mistakes. But don't let this worry you excessively. The Samoans have a great sense of humor and will understand that you are new to their culture. Because of this they will accept more mistakes from you than they would from someone of their own culture. However, don't let this goodwill on their part make your efforts anything less than wholehearted. As you try to speak their language, both linguistically and culturally, you will be surprised at the new dimensions of your experience.

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